SLAM

MAGAZINE

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do memes win votes?
the evolution of feminism in fashion
masculinization of women of color
islam: a “bad” religion
gentrifying goodwill

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slam magazine is committed to illuminating the complexity and intersections of social issues today through writing critically and making provocative art.

Design and photo by: Dhrithi Vishwa

ISSION

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The Liberal Vacuum of the Bay Area

Article by: Sophia Zhang
Design by: Maya Lei Bagalso

The Silicon Valley, commonly known as the Bay Area, comprises the counties of San Francisco, Alameda, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, Marin, Sonoma, Solano, and Napa. This region is famously liberal. In the recent 2024 election, for instance, several Bay Area counties cast over 70% of their ballots for Harris, according to Kron News. Liberal-leaning tendencies also exist among Mountain View High School youth. In a poll conducted by Mountain View High School's student newspaper, The Oracle surveying over 350 students, 71% identified as Democrats. This poses a question: Why is the Silicon Valley so Liberal?

The Silicon Valley and Liberalism

The Silicon Valley boasts a unique liberal culture stemming from its environment filled with competition and innovation. According to an article from the Benton Institute for Broadband and Society, "Tech entrepreneurs are very liberal – among some of the most left-leaning Democrats you can find. They are overwhelmingly in favor of economic policies that redistribute wealth, including higher taxes on rich people and – social services for the poor, including universal health care." Financial contributions from Silicon Valley reflect this liberal inclination. Since 2020, as reported by Fortune, 61.5% ($206.42 million) of political donations from tech conglomerates have been directed to Democratic candidates and causes.

Demographics may also play a factor in shaping the unique political climate of the Bay Area. According to the Bay Area Equity Atlas, as of 2020, 31% or approximately 2.42 million people in the Bay Area were immigrants. U.S.-born Latinx, Asian American, and Mixed/other populations are the fastest-growing groups in the Bay Area. This diversity is due to the Bay Area's booming economy and its strategic location near the Pacific Rim and Mexico. This diverse population leads to a more Democratic and liberal-leaning population. As the Pew Research Center found, Hispanic and Asian voters tend to "tilt more Democratic" with 61% of Hispanic voters aligning with the Democratic Party and 63% of Asian voters aligning with the Democratic Party.

The Liberal Vacuum

A political echo chamber occurs when individuals are primarily exposed to opinions that reinforce their existing beliefs. In the Bay Area, the dominance of liberal ideologies means that conservative or alternative viewpoints may be underrepresented in public discourse, media, education, and social interactions. This phenomenon has been dubbed the "Liberal Vacuum."

Several factors contribute to the formation of this liberal vacuum. Firstly, the Bay Area has a history of progressive activism that aligns with liberal principles. According to the San Francisco State University, in the 1960s, the Bay Area had multiple civil rights movements, where "civil rights activists contested entrenched social relationships, racial understandings, and the economic status quo." This history of liberal movements can paint a backdrop that makes alternative viewpoints seem less acceptable. Further, people often associate with others who share the same similar beliefs and values. Off-handed comments from classmates and teachers can reinforce existing beliefs, reduce exposure to differing opinions, and also make differing viewpoints seem less prevalent for Bay Area youth. In addition, with the rise of social media, media algorithms reinforce feedback loops that amplify like-minded perspectives.

Effects of the Liberal Vacuum

The existence of a liberal vacuum can have several significant effects on both the community and the broader political landscape. When people are not exposed to a variety of perspectives, it may limit critical thinking and understanding of complex issues, hindering meaningful dialogue and cooperation. Furthermore, democracy relies on informed citizens who consider multiple viewpoints. Morgan Kelly from Princeton University wrote in 2021, "As social interactions and individual decisions isolate people into only a few intractable camps, the political system becomes incapable of addressing the range of issues – or formulating the variety of solutions – necessary for government to function and provide the services critical for society." Loss of diverse discourse fundamentally undermines "cooperation and the ability of societies to provide the public goods that make for a healthy society."

As participants in a civil democracy, engaging in discourse that includes perspectives from across the political spectrum is vital. Recognizing inherent personal biases is a crucial first step toward productive and open-minded discussions. Just acknowledging this fact allows for a more productive, and open-minded discussion. Further, it is important not to dismiss or judge opposing viewpoints immediately. Utilizing media platforms like AllSides, The Flip Side, or Ground News – which present news stories from left, center, and right perspectives – and following a variety of news outlets across the political spectrum can help individuals form well-rounded conclusions. A conscious effort to engage with differing opinions is essential for the health of democracy and society at large. By actively seeking out alternative perspectives, individuals can contribute to a more inclusive and resilient community.

Photos By: Kajsa Hoffer

DO MEMES

Article by: Kaelyn Tan | Design by

”You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?” The quote from Vice President Kamala Harris’s speech at the 2023 White House Ceremony attracted online attention as a meme in early 2024. It continued to spread widely at the start of her presidential campaign. Both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump have gained more exposure on social media platforms due to the 2024 presidential elections. While social media can be a platform for the presidential candidates to connect with a broader audience, it also has the potential to misrepresent their image and stance on issues, which may ultimately affect the outcome of the election.

Notably, the Harris campaign participated in the ”BRAT Summer” trend after Charli XCX posted on X saying, ”Kamala IS brat,” which refers to the singer’s latest album. There were many people who made remixes of Harris’s quotes with Charli XCX’s songs as the backtrack. Additionally, there were comments online using coconut trees and green heart emojis to show support for Harris. Harris’s campaign saw social media as a platform to connect with younger voters and strategically posted content that followed the latest online trends. The approach using social media to communicate with young voters was a huge success as Harris’s content online sparked conversations among youth and continued to gain views and likes. On top of establishing a stronger social media presence, the success of the social media tactic was measured by the increase in donations to the campaign and volunteer sign-ups.

However, it is worth considering how Harris’s activity online may have affected how people perceived her as a presidential candidate. Harris’s active participation in the online trends and attempts to follow the Gen Z culture might have undermined her credibility and represented her as an unserious politician to the general public. The main purpose of the content was not to inform viewers of Harris’s vision as a presidential candidate, but rather to gain popularity on social media. While Harris was successful in becoming a viral sensation, her presence online was not effective at promoting her campaign and issues that she represented.

While Donald Trump followed more traditional methods of running a presidential campaign and public outreach, he also had a fair share of

WIN VOTES?

n by: Dhrithi Vishwa & Elena Chai

exposure online as people created memes and videos that poked fun at Trump. During ABC's presidential debate between Trump and Harris, Trump said that immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were "eating the dogs" and "eating the cats". This quote shocked many viewers, and people were quick to point out the absurdity of Trump's claim through memes and remixes of the quote online. People even created dances to the remixes and recorded their pets' reactions to the quote. Trump's outrageous comments on television reflected his image and campaign poorly. People became increasingly concerned with Trump's hostile and discriminatory attitude towards immigrants in the United States and his immigration policies.

Additionally, a number of Trump memes have been generated by artificial intelligence. Some include AI images of Trump riding a lion, performing at a rock concert with a Star Wars stormtrooper, and as a bodybuilder. People have also used AI to falsely claim celebrity endorsements of Trump. There was an AI-generated image of Taylor Swift dressed in an Uncle Sam outfit with text that read, "Taylor wants you to vote for Donald Trump." The AI generated images of Taylor Swift showed how AI can be used to manipulate the truth and spread misinformation online. Furthermore, AI could be used to create content that misrepresents political candidates. This could have major consequences if people continue to blindly believe in the false content they see online. Social media users should recognize that they cannot trust everything on their screens. Additionally, platforms should consider increasing restrictions on and labeling AI generated content.

The 2024 presidential campaign highlights the evolving role of social media in the political world as Harris and Trump experienced some of the first set of challenges and opportunities to engage with voters. Additionally, the AI generated content related to the elections that circulated online raises concerns about misrepresentation of politicians. Social media proved to be a powerful tool for both connection and manipulation in the election cycle, and the possibilities of AI revealed the need for voters to critically evaluate the information they encounter online.

Hyperfem

AND THE DAWN

Article by: Marija Angela Savinovoc | De

Frilly dresses, vibrant nail polish, and Best Friends Forever. These are some of the trappings of hyperfemininity—the concept of exaggerated characteristics, traits, or mannerisms that are traditionally associated with girls and women. These values have been spoon-fed to society, reinforcing the notion that hyper-feminine behaviors are inherent to women, and are natural. However, with the emergence and recollection of perspectives based on gender identity and inner exploration, it reveals an essential question: should women continue to accept such conditioned beliefs, or is it time to let go of the shackles of binary identity?

"It's a girl!"

Society delivers girls a specific image of femininity from the start. From baby showers and gender reveal parties to doctors announcing "It's a girl!" after delivery, expectations are set before first steps are even taken. This pattern then continues into early life, where girls are given toy kitchen sets and baby dolls, and read children's picture books in which female characters have noticeably big lips or exaggerated long eyelashes.

In a UNICEF article that discusses gender equality in early childhood education, it states that "Children begin to have an understanding of their gender by the age of two or three," and that "Children who adhere to gender stereotypes avoid toys and activities they believe are not relevant for their own sex." Such logic can be applied to psychological or mental sex traits as well, as the article continues on how developing children are able to sense gender differences as early as six years

mininity

OF BIO-ESSENTIALISM

| Design by: Dhrithi Vishwa & Ace Penn

old, and how young girls are more likely to subconsciously agree with gender conforming beliefs. This shows that when and how early applications of gender-abiding norms are introduced can greatly impact how we grow up to perceive them later in life.

Early schooling also tends to bolster the concepts of gender stereotypes. Academia introduces different "branches" of femininity. There are "girly-girls", the ones who wear ruffled shirts, have bows in their hair, have brightly colored leggings, and are never seen without their dainty mary jane's or sparkling Twinkle Toes. On the opposite side of the spectrum, there were "tomboys," who wear typical tees, pants, converse sneakers, and, most importantly, liked or preferred to associate themselves with their male counterparts. With these two radical forms of expression, it is no wonder that girls develop tentative relationships with their femininity.

There are many other factors that influence this inner-conflict outside the classroom. The presentation of women in the media offers a plethora of caricatures. But more often than not, these depictions do more harm than good. For example, Jessica Rabbit in the 1988 film Who Framed Roger Rabbit, is seen more as a sex symbol rather than just a character. Her features are greatly exaggerated, and her personality is sultry, making her a clear manifestation of the male fantasy. The early 2000s celebrity Paris Hilton is glitzy, glamorous, and known for her ravishingly feminine style. However, her confidence and self-expression are often misinterpreted. The media frequently responds to her image with annoyance, hate or discomfort. This reduces her persona to the tropes of the "Bimbo" or "Dumb Blonde."

Such portrayals reinforce damaging stereotypes about women.

Femininity and its intricacy has led many to believe that, perhaps, this is all women are good for. That this is all women know, or rather all they should know. This allows the theory of bio-essentialism to take center stage. Bio-essentialism is the idea that qualities of someone's personality are innate, and the complexities that make up their character are not products of upbringing or cultural norms, but are rather already predetermined from their natural essence. It allows the human brain to make the process of categorizing people into specific classifications easier and more straightforward. Applying this concept suggests that the idea of gender is binding, finite, or simply "biological".

This ties back to the push for conformity from an early age. Parents have taught their children that women should do this, that men should do that, and that's what their parents taught them, and so on and so forth. History is littered with gender ideals and perceived roles, from the inferior-superior rhetoric in Ancient Greece to the advertised housewife of 1950s America. However, new social and scientific developments trump these old teachings. Many cultures all over the world have different views on feminism. For example, Indigenous Native American tribes all over North America also had interesting spins on the idea of gender. Countless tribes welcomed the idea of multiple gender identities and gender fluidity. They also embraced the idea of equality between their respective tribes. In regions throughout pre-colonial Africa, women were socially and politically active. They were important members of their communities, and mothers and grandmothers were highly respected. This nullifies the argument that women should be submissive to their male counterparts since, in places like Africa, that hasn't been the case for many years. That is, until Western colonists brought ideas like binary gender roles with them during their conquest, now deeply rooted into many African cultures today.

The bio-essentialist lens of femininity is also incredibly rigid. That is, it leaves many groups out of the conversation. The transgender community has faced many challenges over the years, and the topic of traditional womanhood has left many trans women feeling ostracized. If bio-essentialism means women are the way they are by nature, it refuses to include trans women in the conversation. Most trans women are often met with contempt from cisgender women today, despite being the same gender.

Whether we perceive gender-tied behavior to be biological or not, a person's relationship to their sex and gender identity is personal to them. For women, the connection to femininity doesn't need to be all or nothing, and should not be solely determined by what mainstream society dictates. Femininity exists on a spectrum, and gender alone does not exclusively define us. This form of identity should instead contribute to the multitude of layers that make up who we are.

"THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX"

by Amanda Ford

How can I think outside the box if I can't even be outside the box?
School says, "think outside the box," but you're still limited to the directions on Google Docs.
Society encourages us to "think outside the box," but if we think too much, all our ideas will be shot.

Stay in your box, stay in your lane, you know what'll happen if you leave that terrain.
Explore, but stay with us, we promise there's nothing new to discuss.
Yeah, you can roam and be free, as long as you don't disagree with me.
Go ahead, I welcome you, share your thoughts as long as you shape them into my views.

"Think outside the box," has never been a bigger lie.
There is no room. Any idea outside of your box might as well walk towards its tomb.
Why is it that all of our ideas are sent to die?

What if we all took a step out together?
I imagine that the land outside is full of freedom and pleasure.
No need to get pulled in by society's opinions. They don't get to decide our decisions.
Besides, at the end of the day, someone is always there to throw a fit.

So hear this for me and I mean it.
No lies, no tricks, or games.
Outside the box is where we shall remain.

"I HAVE A DREAM"

by JJ

This piece was taken with permission from a writing group at the Santa Clara County Men's Jail.

Dr Martin Luther King spoke the words, "I have a dream." Today, half a century later, I stand before you to tell you that the dream is not dead and that I too, have a dream.

I have a dream to be able to live in a world free from oppression. Free of the oppression of the body, free of oppression of the spirit and the mind. Free from the burden of judgment, for one's past should not determine their future.

Yes, I have a dream today, that the tattered histories of our yesterday shall not govern the possibilities of our tomorrows. A dream that who we have been will not determine who we can become.

For as I stand before you today, chained and imprisoned by regrets and judgment, I still have a dream. A dream that one day my body shall join my soul and my mind in a place far from within these walls. Yes I have a dream today of a happier, brighter and free tomorrow.

JJ

The Evolution of Feminism in Fashion

Article by: Sophia Ong | Design by: Elena Chai & Nora Lorincz

What does it mean to dress like a woman? The history of women's fashion is long and fraught with pain for the sake of beauty, from rib-snapping corsets to the foot binding of ancient China to lead-filled makeup products. Women's clothing has generally served the purpose of shaping, twisting, and beautifying instead of comfort or function, primarily because women have been valued by their ability to reproduce, and their ability to stand at their husband's side and look the part.

In her 1850s newspaper The Lily, feminist and suffragette Amelia Bloomer published an article that would forever reshape the concept of women's fashion. "The costume of women should be suited to her wants and necessities," she wrote. "It should conduce at once to her health, comfort, and usefulness; and, while it should not fail also to conduce to her personal adornment, it should make that end of secondary importance."
It might seem obvious that clothing should suit the wearer's needs. In the 1800s, however, the general public saw the article as a novel and inflammatory concept. Even so, the thought that clothing should be valued for comfort and function was too great of an appeal for American women to ignore.

Her invention? The bloomers – loose trousers that tapered at the ankle, often accompanied by a vest or short dress. The term "bloomers" transcended a mere garment, it became a label for any woman willing to interrupt fashion norms of the time, forgoing weighted layers of ankle-length skirts for looser clothing that allowed for ease of movement. Though comfort came with a cost. The Bloomers faced heavy ridicule, both in the press and on the streets, resulting in many women abandoning the practice and returning to the traditional dress. Even though it might seem like the Bloomer's progress had negated itself, the movement had a significant impact on later movements to come. It was proof that something as simple as changing clothing could deeply rattle centuries of patriarchy, that physical freedoms could lay progress towards feminist goals, like the elusive right to vote or equalising the power imbalance between genders.

The ridicule Amelia Bloomer and her followers faced is just one example of a familiar pattern. In the 1920s, "flappers" cast aside their long skirts and corsets in favour of high heels, lingerie, and lower necklines – a model of the sexual liberation movement of the time. They practised their autonomy in a way that scandalised the nation; flappers smoked, drank freely, and promoted casual sexuality. In the wake of the first World War, after the young male population had significantly declined, women were

realising they could defy the high-strung and modest traditions of the past, using clothing as a tool to express themselves and jab at convention. Still, they faced swift disapproval by the public. Older generations denounced the style as immoral and improper, laws were passed in certain states to regulate women's clothing, and newspapers called the style "near-nudity".

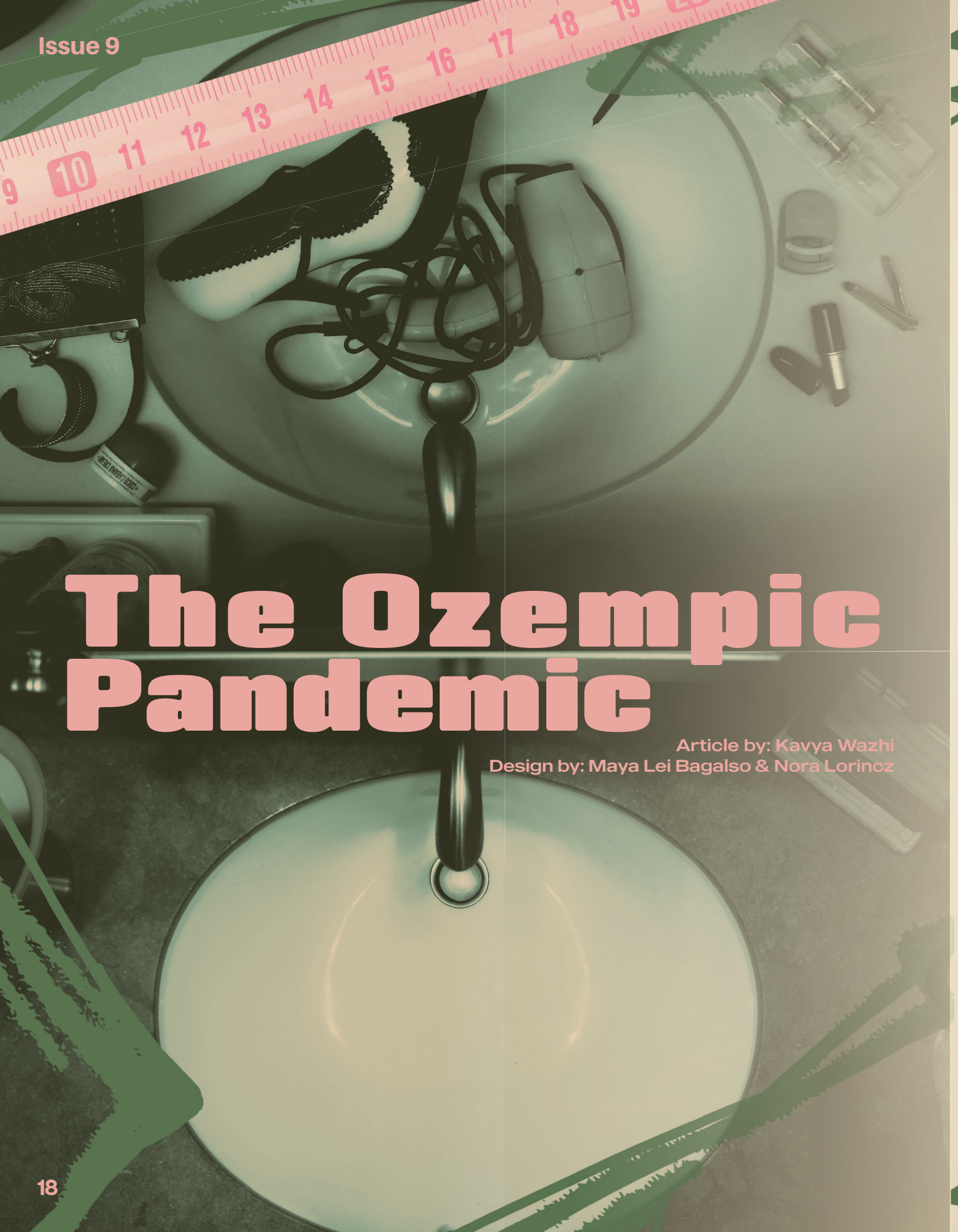
Then the 1960s saw the rise in power dressing, a style characterised by shoulder pads, blazers, and long pants, signifying the movement of women into the previously male-dominated work force. This went beyond styling choices, it was a statement for any woman determined to disrupt societal inequities in the office. But with everything else, there was a cost. Women who adopted the style faced a familiar rhetoric, labelled as "unfeminine" and seen as threats to societal norms. That isn't even to mention the false pretence of women being less capable in the same positions as men. Regardless, the movement left an undeniable mark on future feminist movements, proving that clothing could act as a catalyst in pushing forward goals of equality in the professional world.

Photo by: Kajsa Hoffer

With every historical progression, there has been inevitable backlash. Trailblazers like Amelia Bloomer – and later, singer Marlene Dietrich, model Grace Jones, and others – were denounced as "unfeminine", which begged the question: what does it mean to dress like a woman?

In 1700s America, dressing like a woman meant covering up. It meant putting modesty before comfort, even before beauty. Nowadays, dressing like a woman seems to mean the very opposite. The most "feminine" items someone can wear are miniskirts, makeup, crop tops, high heels, lingerie. To dress like a woman, historically, has meant navigating a web of societal expectations where fashion has often been a tool to either keep women complacent or for women to challenge suffocating societal norms. At different points in history, "dressing like a woman" has signified modesty, beauty, strength, or rebellion – depending on the cultural climate and feminist movements of the time. From the restrictive corsets and layered skirts of the 1800s to the bold power suits of the 1960s, women have consistently used fashion to express autonomy, challenge patriarchy, and redefine their roles in society.

Today, while there is more freedom to define what it means to "dress like a woman," our choices and expressions are still inevitably shaped by the lingering pressures of patriarchal standards – whether through beauty ideals, school dress codes, or the policing of women's bodies. To dress like a woman now means navigating these complexities while embracing the freedom to assert one's identity and agency, choosing what empowers us in a world that still places expectations on how we present ourselves.



The Ozempic Pandemic

Article by: Kavya Wazhi
Design by: Maya Lei Bagalso & Nora Lorincz

Obesity is not a body type, it is a medical condition. The rise of the body positivity movement in the 21st century has positively challenged American beauty standards, but it has also separated the human body from science. The use of ozempic, a GLP-1 diabetes and weight loss drug, has skyrocketed among many celebrities from Elon Musk to Oprah Winfrey. Our obsession with celebrity culture has corroded our evaluation of these drugs. Many people consider ozempic as an alternative to comsetic surgery or photoshop. The reality is that ozempic is a medical intervention, not a method for body modification. With so much attention towards the implications of the drug in the social and cultural sphere, the public has forgotten to understand the debate of ozempic in the sphere of medicine and health.

There are individuals who cannot lose weight even with increased physical activity and low-calorie diets who can be prescribed ozempic for their weight. Additionally, many women who struggle with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) can use ozempic to manage the symptoms, one of which is weight gain. The body positivity movement should be reframed to prioritize health instead of pushing individuals to feel good about their unhealthy bodies. It is true that celebrities often misuse drugs such as ozempic because they can essentailly buy a prescription, but it is important to note that there are side effects to this that are only more reason for the public to shift away from celebrity health narratives.

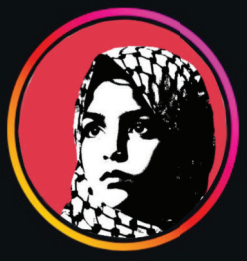
Ozempic is an FDA approved prescription medication used to treat type-2 diabetes. It has become synonomous with a weight-loss drug due to a great deal of misinformation. Part of this misinformation is owed to the celebrity use of ozempic, which has brought it to the forefront of social media discourse. To followers of celebrity news and gossip, it can appear that ozempic is a lazy alternative to losing weight and that it is a return to the American value for thinness that was supposedly rejected by the body positive movement. It must again be emphasized that obesity is not a body type and that it is not always a choice. Obesity is influenced by both environmental and genetic factors. problems.

It is important that the public understand the full picture behind what celebrities convey about ozempic through social media before the drug becomes widely accessible. Research is still being done on ozempic's effects on the body, but it is suggested that muscle loss and bone weakness are among them. Doctors evaluate the drug and weigh the benefits and side effects to the particular patient. A failure to do so will only lead to more adverse outcomes. The conversation about ozempic should no longer focus on its role in American beauty standards, but more on the health and safety of individuals.

Photos By: Kajsa Hoffer

Photo by: Kajsa Hoffer

THE JUSTICE FAD



Article by: Laasya Kompella

Design by: Ace Penn & Elena Chai

During the summer of 2020, the news and social media were flooded with coverage of Black Lives Matters protests fighting against police brutality. The next summer in 2021, the focus was on the Taliban taking over Afghanistan and enforcing strict gender apartheid laws. In February 2022, Ukraine was invaded by Russia and a war broke out between the two forces. Most recently, in October 2023, all eyes have been drawn toward the Israel-Hamas war. Each of these stories were huge, capturing social media's attention with hashtags and celebrities' calls-to-action. But now, it feels like most of them have faded out of the public image, even though they continue to be real, important problems. For example, once American troops pulled out of Afghanistan after 20 years of war, the Taliban quickly took over. They imposed strict laws erasing women from public spaces, persecuted ethnic and religious minorities, and committed human rights violations including arbitrary punishment and torture. The American media quickly publicized and politicized the story. Today, barely any attention is paid to the country, even as the regime becomes increasingly harsh. It's almost like the story has vanished from the public's consciousness the fate of nearly every major news story. Some current social issues, such as the crises in Sudan and Balochistan, barely scratch the surface of the media's attention. Why does this happen? This article examines how Americans approach social change and advocacy through social media activism: the process of using social media to bring awareness to topics.

Social media activism has a long history. However, the most familiar showcase of this phenomenon is the Black Lives Matter movement. The Black Lives Matter movement was accompanied with hashtags, Black fist emojis and icons, and celebrities speaking on issues to raise awareness and money. Activism has turned almost exclusively online, where raising visibility is prioritized. Although this has advantages, for example, Ariana Grande raised over $120 million for Palestine in just five hours after sharing a link, it also has definite drawbacks.

There has been a transformation in how Americans engage with social issues dramatizing them and almost turning them into trends.

although people are more aware of world news, they are not necessarily more willing to volunteer or donate to certain causes. this may contribute to "mean world syndrome." the theory was popularized by sociologist george gerbner who said that televised violence makes people think the world is more dangerous than it really is, increasing pessimism and feelings of hopelessness or inaction. this was theorized in the 1970's, when news coverage started to get more dramatic for example, the constant "breaking news" banner on cnn. now that we have 24 hour-news cycles, and social media sensationalizing every headline, it is not surprising that the effects have been exacerbated.

Additionally, it becomes a celebrity's responsibility, or even burden, to make statements or endorsements. for example, the popular tiktoker hayley kalil's controversy from the met gala, where she was called out for attending the met gala while many are suffering in poverty in war, is reminiscent of this, and the online pressure for chappell roan to endorse a candidate in the u.s. 2024 presidential election. This has led to the now popular idea that if someone, especially a celebrity, isn't bringing visibility to a topic, they are actively harming it.

This also means we tend to spread ourselves thin. Sometimes we feel the need to care about every single issue in the news and work towards all of them in order to be a good person. This is humanly impossible, leads to burn out, contributes superficially to the cause, and leads to people caring less.

The rise of "digital activism" also has implications for America's attention span. Social issues are transforming into trends, rather than problems. It's not surprising considering that algorithms favor content that gets the most engagement. Social media was made for the flashy and the attention-grabbing content. Even if people post on the internet wanting to present an issue that they sincerely care about, social media likes grabbing things and almost trend-ifying them. "Takes," or opinions, are quick and easily-digestible, but lack nuance, and some of the discourse, especially on Twitter, has become shouting-matches. Issues quickly become popular, such as the anti-mandatory hijab protests in Iran, and just as quickly fall to the wayside as social media looks for the next new thing.

Social media activism does wonders for large-scale fundraising and celebrity advocacy, but it's not productive for individuals.

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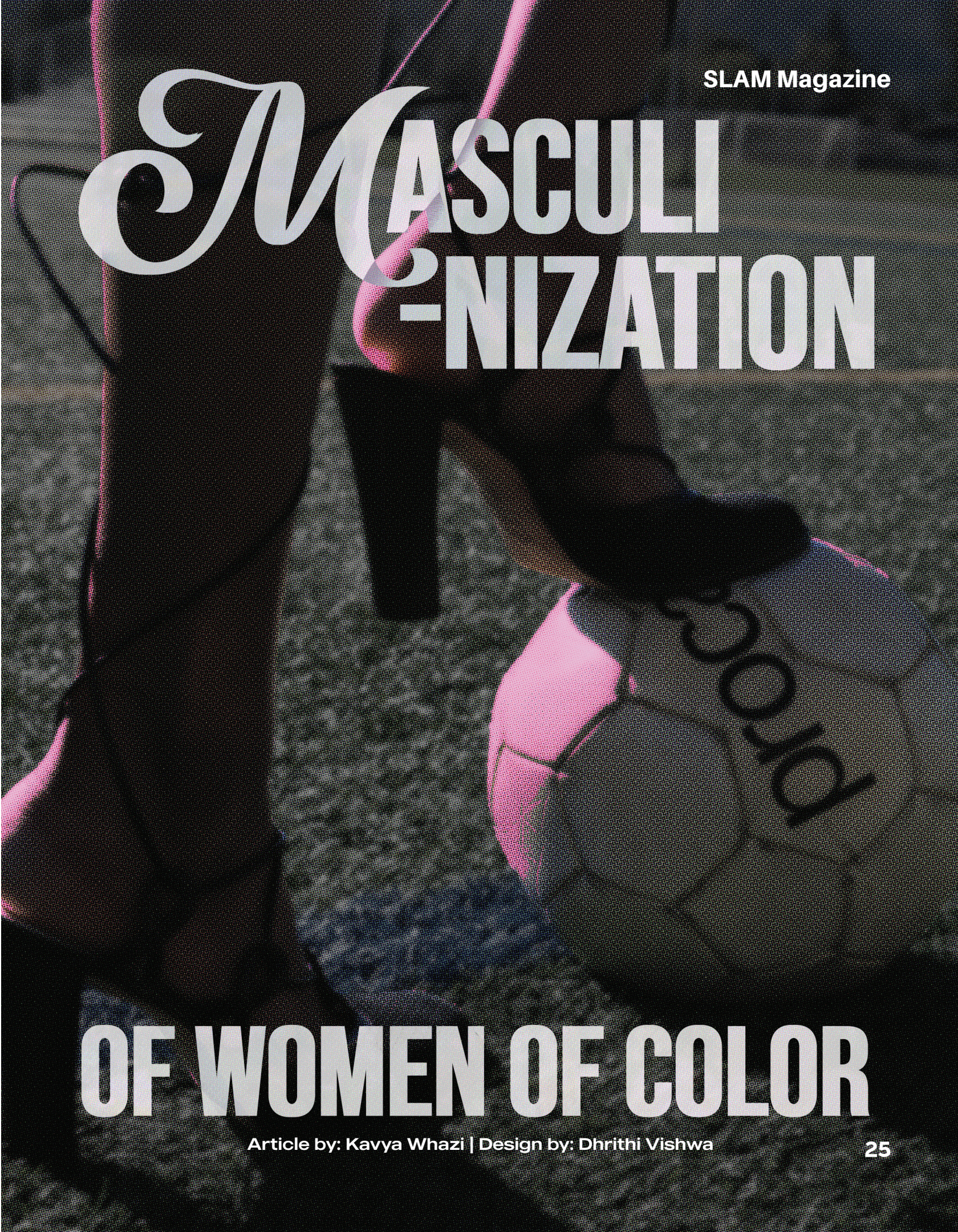
There isn't a rigid definition of what exactly an activist is, but it's important that individuals weigh their priorities and find out what they are really passionate about. Real change doesn't come from hopping on the "next big thing." Real change comes from individuals who care and invest their time and energy in ways that matter.

Photos by: Kajsa Hoffer

MASCULI-NIZATION OF WOMEN OF COLOR



Article by: Kavya Whazi | Design by: Dhrithi Vishwa

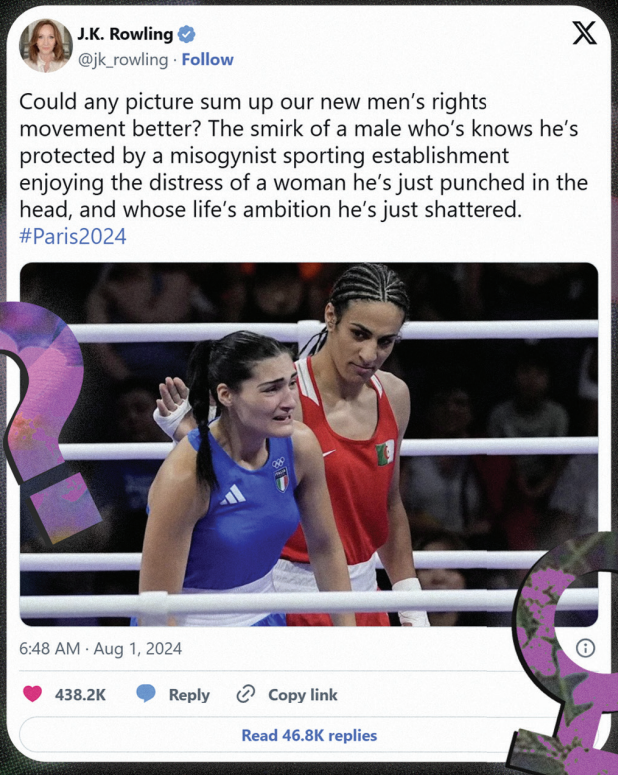
”I was born a woman, I lived a woman, [and] I competed as a woman,” Algerian boxer Imane Khelif said after winning the gold medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics. Khelif faced allegations of competing as a transgender woman after beating her Italian opponent Angela Carini. The events brought attention back to Khelif’s disqualification in 2023 after failing an unspecified gender eligibility test that indicated the boxer had ”competitive advantages over other female competitors.

Khelif was assigned female at birth and does not identify as transgender or intersex. Regardless, she has faced several accounts of racism, sexism, and transphobia in her career, and the events in 2024 intensified the amount of hate and bullying she received on online platforms. Following the defeat of her Italian opponent, Khelif’s next opponent, Hungary’s Luca Hamori, posted many hateful messages and images on social media comparing Khelif to a monster and accusing her of being a male. This was in direct violation of the Declaration of Responsibilities for athletes competing in the Olympics.

The hate that Khelif received reflects the tendency of Western society to masculinize women of color. This article explores the intersectionality of race and gender tracing back to colonialism and the establishment of Western beauty standards, and analyzes the effects of transphobia in the success of cisgendered women of color.

In ”The Specter of Sex: Gendered Foundations of Racial Formation in the United States,” Sally Kitch traces back race associations with gender to religion in the 16th and 17th century and its relation to skin color. Dark skin was a sign of evil — the ”Devil’s incarnate.” This language was used as a justification for the religious conversion of non-Christians, which established ”light skin as a sign of inner purity.” Following the development of black-skin racism during the Renaissance period, ”black” transformed into an undesirable trait that was the opposite of beauty or ”fairness,” characters used to describe women’s appearance; ”To be black was to be ’unwomanly’.” This account establishes the relationship between light skin with femininity and dark skin with masculinity.

Kitch also establishes the likely origins of the connection between body hair and masculinity. French physician and traveler Francois Bernier, who was one of the first to establish racial classification, used facial hair as a measure of racial distinction. The sparse beards of African, Asian, and American


J.K. Rowling
@jk_rowling · Follow
Could any picture sum up our new men’s rights movement better? The smirk of a male who’s knows he’s protected by a misogynist sporting establishment enjoying the distress of a woman he’s just punched in the head, and whose life’s ambition he’s just shattered.
#Paris2024
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Indian men were inferior to European men and, by extension, feminine. The presence of beards, therefore, was superior and masculinized. The association of body hair with masculinity has carried into the modern day, masculinizing many women of color who have darker and thicker body hair than white women.

Differences in women's anatomy were used by European colonizers as marks of racial superiority. By considering African women "masculinized," Europeans could prove the "savagery" of the Black race, which was used as a justification for the colonization and imposed "civilization" of non-white populations. The Western world's masculinization of dark features is a reflection of racism and colorism, and is the foundation of modern beauty norms. Women of color have never been and would never be the "all-American beauty" – thin, blonde, blue-eyed, small-nosed, and white. The stereotype of women of color as inherently less feminine, and therefore less attractive, than white women has seeped into the modern spheres of media and the workforce. The Western depiction of feminism works against women of color who are already racially discriminated against in a white-dominated workforce and have to work significantly harder to claim their spot at the top. Even once they do land on success, there will be a stream of denial, accusation, and harassment.

Serena Williams' journey to becoming the greatest female tennis player in history was deeply affected by comments on her masculine body shape and emphasis on the color of her skin. She has been called a "gorilla" and a "savage," which no doubt has traces of systemic racism, and told that her arms are "manly" and that she is "too strong" to be a woman. Many have questioned her sex, which she has confirmed numerous times as female, and whether her athleticism came from hard work or was a product of male testosterone levels. Transphobia not only destroys the confidence and self-esteem of cisgendered women of color, it can also make competing in sporting events extremely difficult or even impossible. The media often invalidates the success of women of color who continue to be stripped of their femininity. Although it is impossible to reverse centuries of colorism and its contribution to Western ideals of beauty and feminism, steps must be taken to acknowledge the role that these systems of oppression play in the daily lives of women of color. Awareness is the first step towards change. Women of color should no longer be expected to prove their womanhood. Instead, Western media should celebrate their achievements and empower their femininity.

Photos by: Kajsa Hoffer

movie media review

Design by: Sophie Lam, Ace Penn,
& Maya Lei Bagalso

What was your favorite movie from 2024?

- Saturday Night
- Wicked
- Moana 2
- The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes
- Dìdi
- Dune 2
- Challengers

Movie recommendations:

- Shattered Glass
- Tim Burton Batman movies
- The proposal
- Studio ghibli films
- Conjuring series
- Amélie
- Close (a24)
- Bend it like beckham

Which actor do you think will become more famous over time?

- Zendaya
- Walker Scobell (2)
- Ariana Greenblatt
- Timothée Chalamet
- Cynthia Erivo
- Taylor Russel
- Mikey Madison
- Saoirse Ronan

What do you think about movie awards (ex. Oscars)?

"I like watching the Oscars and rooting for a certain movie to win, but I feel like the actual voters are pretty biased when voting. A lot of the awards are more based on popularity and cultural impact rather than actually how good the movie is." - Abbie Garcia, 10

How do movies influence the way you think about the world?

"I think sometimes they overly dramatize something or they can give false impressions of things like school and relationships. Though I do think some movies helped me develop more empathy for people with completely different experiences from me and widened my worldview." -Jane Liou, 11

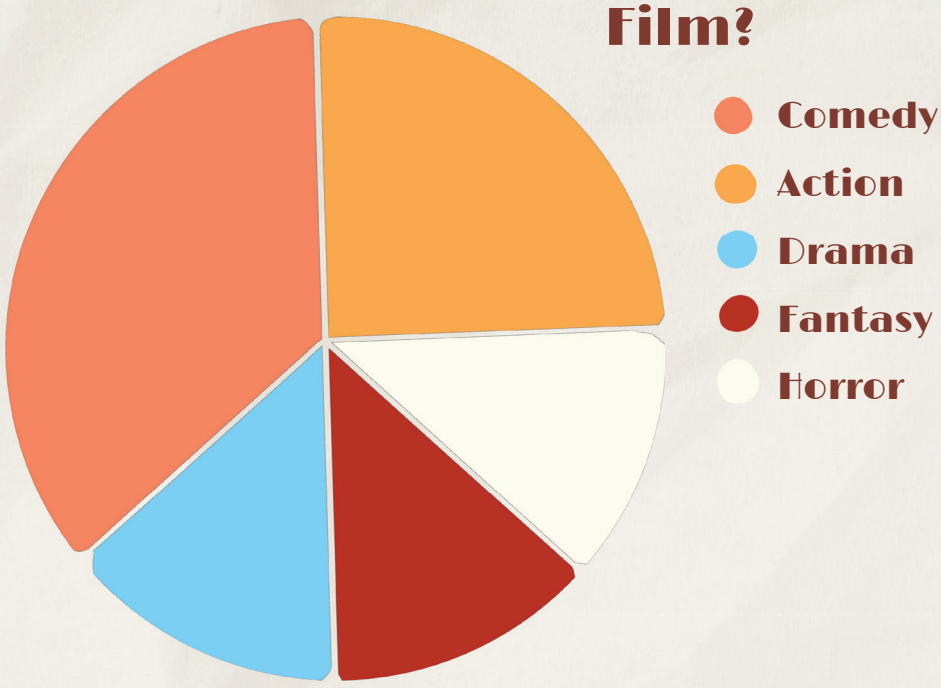
"They can create unreachable expectations regarding looks and sometimes fantasize different parts of life." -Claire Schwarshoff, 11

What do you think about franchises and sequels right now (ex: Star Wars and Marvel)?

"I feel like Marvel is just bad. Their movies usually always suck because they always have to fit around a certain narrative/plot line/ character trope." - Amy Wu, 11

"Depends on how good the movie is." - Abbie Garcia, 10

What's Your Favorite Genre of Film?



Why is diversity in movies important?

"A few different reasons. First of all, it is important to see yourself or who you want to be in the media and real life. Secondly, I think media/movies affect how people remember certain time periods. There is a saying that "history is written by the winners" and this applies to movies too. The experiences of oppressed groups can be erased from public knowledge, but diversity casting can repair that." - Lillian Husky, 12

How do you feel about movie adaptations?

"There is a lot of controversy with getting the right character, and I feel that sometimes classics are better." -Eden Jamtgaard, 10

Should singers and musicians be in movies?

"It depends. Some singers do not have the qualification to act and should not be casted if they aren't qualified, regardless of their popularity." - Shradha Lakshman, 10

Article by: Kelly Himenez
Design by: Nora Lorincz & Sophie Lam

ISLAM: A "BAD" RELIGION

Media's portrayal of certain religious, ethnic, and socially distinct groups has a strong influence on personal views and prejudice. Islam in the media is typically portrayed as an oppressive system towards women who participate in it. In the press, the hijab (headscarf) serves as one of the most visible symbols of Islam, and full-body coverings like the burqa follow closely behind, and they have been portrayed as symbols of women's oppression. Many believe Muslim women cover themselves to submit to male authority or rigid religious rules. However, contrary to this rhetoric, Muslim women may choose to wear hijabs or other forms of modest dress for personal or religious reasons. It is not always a sign of oppression. In fact, Muslim women engage actively in their communities, hold professional positions and lead multiple social movements. The stereotype that Islam oppresses women oversimplifies the lives of Muslim women and disregards the variety of ethnic, economic, and personal factors that shape them and their choices. It's important for the media to portray reasons why people practice Islam since all religions still have their beauty in them.

Additionally, the link of arranged marriages to Islam's patriarchal customs. While some communities do participate in arranged marriages, this issue is not confined to countries with a Muslim majority. The issue of arranged marriage is rooted deeply in ethnic practices,socio-economic factors and sometimes in legal systems, yet it is often framed in the media as an Islamic problem rather than as a broader global one. One of the main reasons why the media portrays Islam as an abusive religion is because of racism towards the group. Muslim discrimination depiction has several roots, including historical, political, and cultural factors, and is influenced by complex geopolitical events, such as the aftermath of 9/11 and the wars in the Middle East.

One of the most pervasive stereotypes of the Muslim community suggests that Muslims are naturally violent and that they are linked to terrorism. High-profile acts of terrorism by extremist groups like ISIS or Al-Qaeda often fuel this stereotype even though an enormous majority of Muslims reject violence. The stereotype overlooks the peaceful lives and varied experiences of more than 1.8 billion Muslims around the world and harms their true representation. For example, Zakat is an obligatory form of almsgiving that is required to be given by Muslims, where a portion of their wealth (usually 2.5%) is given to those in need. People consider it both a spiritual obligation and a social responsibility. Muslims around the world donate billions through Zakat every year because it combats poverty and hunger and

reduces inequality. Muslims are encouraged to give voluntary charity (Sadaqah) in addition to paying Zakat because both acts reflect their generosity and commitment to helping those in need. This is given at any time and in any amount and for any cause that you choose. Countless Muslims worldwide regularly donate to local and global charities and hospitals for disaster relief efforts and social services because they believe in supporting those in need. These show the good deeds that Islam has done for the community. It's not right or representative to depict Islam as a "bad" religion.

In Western societies, and especially in the United States and Europe, they often depict Muslims as outsiders who do not belong. They represent Muslims as unable or unwilling to fit into mainstream society and ignore millions who have lived in these countries for generations. This "othering" promotes xenophobia and creates a climate filled with suspicion and division.. Even with this depiction of Islam, people in the media fail to realize that the majority of religions have factors that contribute to the oppression of certain groups. For example, Catholicism has a strong distaste for same-sex relationships, which are even banned within certain denominations and churches. This can lead to homophobia and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, yet the focus remains on the oppression of Islam or other Arabic religions.

Photo credits: Kajsa Hoffer

GENTRIFYING GOODWILL

Article By: Abbie Garcia | Design By: Sophie Lam & Maya Lei Bagalso

After scrolling on Instagram and Tiktok for only a few minutes, you may quickly find an influencer posting their latest "thrift haul." There's been an undeniable surge in thrifting in recent years, with the secondhand clothing market being worth around $28 billion in 2019 and projected to hit around $64 billion by the end of 2024. With this massive influx due to social media and the climate movement, according to the NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study, many in the thrifting community have posed the question: is this sudden increase in thrifting a blessing or a curse?

Secondhand stores or thrift shops are stores that sell used clothing, household items, and more. Some common thrift store chains include Goodwill, the Salvation Army, and Savers. These donation based thrift stores sell their items at lower costs and aim to help lower-income people have access to clothing that is more affordable than department stores.

However, the popularization of thrifting on social media has opened the gates for a new group of shoppers. These shoppers come to thrift stores to refresh their wardrobes with unique and trendy clothing rather than accommodating a financial necessity. Although buying second hand clothing should be encouraged because of its benefits to the environment from increasing the lifespan of clothing and reducing waste, the "trendification" of thrifting has led to the gentrification of many thrift stores.

Gentrification is the process of

change in a typically poor location as wealthier people move into an area. Some people argue that gentrification is good because it can reduce crime rates and improve a place's economy. However, gentrification can also displace longtime residents, oftentimes ethnic minorities, as the cost of living increases. Although discourse on gentrification typically surrounds housing, it can also be applied to thrift stores. For instance, the increase of consumers with a disposable income shopping at thrift stores has encouraged these stores to increase their prices and factors for valuations. In 2010, Goodwill's valuation guide based their prices on the item for sale. However, since 2020, the guide included a range of factors for pricing such as the gender, style, and occasion the garment is designed for: women's everyday dresses are priced from 3 to 17 dollars, while women's evening dresses have a range of 10 to 30 dollars. Moreover, the pricing of garments also depends on the

judgment of the Goodwill employees. This shows that the prices of items now depend on how much a shopper would be willing to pay as a means to gain more profit. As people with higher incomes begin to shop at thrift stores, the prices at these stores increase, which makes it difficult for lower-income people to shop at the stores that were originally meant to support them.

The pricing out of large communities from thrift stores also discourages lower-income individuals from making purchases that extend the life-span of clothing and benefit the environment. Without the options of thrift stores, lower-income people are often forced to turn to cheap and unethical fast-fashion brands because they have no other options. These brands emit massive amounts of greenhouse gasses and use unethical labor practices.

In addition, the popularization of secondhand clothing on social media has contributed to the rise of independently owned, curated thrift stores. Oftentimes, curated thrift stores market themselves to be more trendy by giving their stores a certain aesthetic and by selling higher quality vintage clothing. As a result, the owners of these stores inflate their prices to compensate for the work of looking through racks of clothing that are sourced from donation-based thrifts and outside merchants. Some stores also make repairs to clothing or upcycle pieces. Although it can be enjoyable to shop at these stores, the act of reselling clothing from donation-based thrift stores in mass quantities further drives up prices and takes away the already limited quality pieces of clothing that could be going to people who are not able to afford retail clothing. Furthermore, many question the ethics of selling a pair of jeans for $60 when

they were bought for less than 25% of that price. Reasonably so, many people are infuriated by this business model.

Due to the recent resurgence of the Climate Movement in 2019, many people have begun to be more conscious of their carbon footprint.The production of new clothing in factories emits large amounts of greenhouse gasses and toxins into the air which contributes to global warming. Moreover, tossed out clothing adds to the mounds of waste in landfills. With the fashion industry being the second most polluting industry in the world, many people have shifted to shopping at thrift stores as a small contribution to help save the Earth. Shopping at secondhand stores should be encouraged to reduce waste and extend the lifespan of clothing. To encourage more people to shop from the already existing supply of clothing, thrifting should never be reserved for only one class of people.

For individuals not shopping at a thrift store out of necessity, it is important to remember the privilege of not having to rely on thrift stores and how consumerism can affect other people. It can be easy to buy more than what you need simply because clothing at secondhand stores is more affordable. However, buying too much clothing simply because it's cheap produces more waste, which is the opposite of what a thrifter should practice. If a person has the means to do so, there are also options for new clothing that are made more sustainably. For example, the platform, "Good On You," rates and recommends brands that have sustainable and ethical practices.

We have less than six years until the damage to our climate will have devastating and irreversible consequences. More people should take part in ethical consumption. As detailed by Newcastle University, ethical consumers base their purchases on ethical values such as human rights, sustainability, and the brand's treatment of animals. With clothing, this can mean buying secondhand while also helping to maintain thrifting as a practice open to people of all financial statuses. This can be promoted by encouraging people to thrift and not buying more than what you need. Lastly, even though younger generations may not have the political power to create laws in aid of these issues, they can still choose what businesses to support. If you have the means to do so, mindful consumption should be used to support the businesses that best reflect our morals and ethics. We vote with our dollars.

SLAM Magazine

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